

more THAN MEETS

THE EYE IN GARDEN CITY

No other house in the Boise Valley—surely no other house in Idaho—has an Art League of America membership card (1942) on its living room wall. Surel Mitchell has one; it belonged to her father, Ulek Tosher, who immigrated from Poland to America at age thirteen. Two of his paintings (imagine Chagall with a sense of whimsy) also hang on her walls, part of an informal near-gallery that double-dog-dares the word “décor” and illuminates her elongated house and integrated studio within sight and sound of the Boise River in Garden City.

If Mitchell has a mainspring, it is her art—multiform and manifold and plenteous: acrylics of a renovated abstract expressionism that evoke Gorky and de Kooning; figurative, emphatically flat paintings of vased flowers and impassive faces barely breathing a suppressed warmth; numinous amber shellac circle paintings that glow like extra-large jars of orange blossom honey; small, votive, mixed-media pieces from her “Legends & Legacies” series touched by the influence of things Jewish and Catholic and tinted with an overall mystery—traditional and modern melt together, recalling poet Paul Claudel, “Nabi of the beautiful icons,” who in 1890 proclaimed, “It is to be remembered that a painting, before being a war horse, a nude woman, or any old anecdote, is essentially a flat surface filled with colors arranged in a certain order.”

...it just happens

An aphorism says it is better to understand a little than to misunderstand a lot. Mitchell, who describes herself as self-taught, meaning much has come to her by experimentation, tends to



Noah III, copper, oil stick, found images/objects, ink on handmade white paper, 13 x 9".

make pieces in series, each strikingly different from the last. “I’ll get an idea,” she says, “and I have to make it visible. The media determines the style—becomes the style—it just happens; the angels give directions as far as I’m concerned. You begin, and that leads to the rest. When I work on two pieces at the same time—one on the easel, one on the wall—I can solve two problems simultaneously. Working in your head, it’s all problem-solving; often you are unconsciously figuring out what to do with the second one. It’s all trial and error; I don’t know how it will turn out. And when I’m working on a piece,” she adds, “it’s in my head 24 hours a day.”

One of four children, Surel grew up in a small town in Pennsylvania, graduated from high school at 17, attended Pennsylvania State University for a year and a half, then, disgruntled by the strictures of college life, left. She vaulted to southern California, where she worked jobs as various and unimaginative as file clerk and drugstore clerk. She married, lived in San Luis Obispo for a year, and following the birth of her two daughters, went back to college at Palomar in San Marcos, California, but dropped out just before moving to Boise in 1977 because her husband, an engineer with Hewlett-Packard, had been offered a position in Boise. After a quick visit, she resisted the move unless he agreed to live within

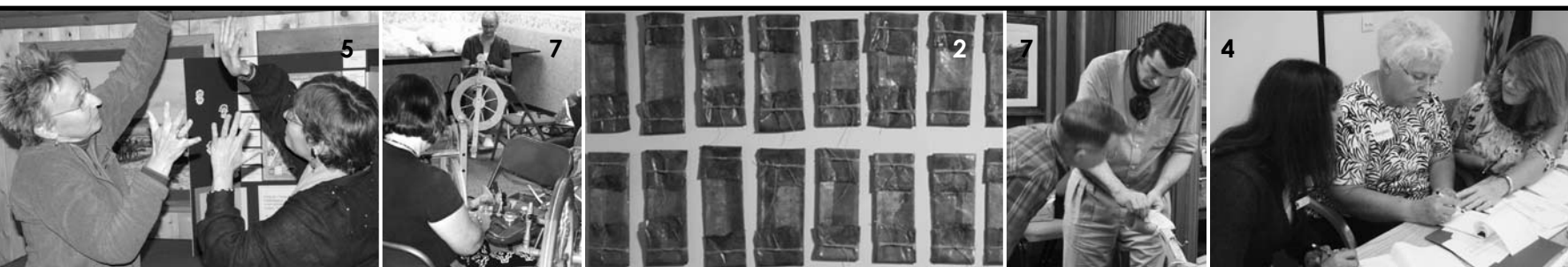


Glass Half Full, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 42".



Through the Window Lightly, shellac, graphite on paper, 6 x 6".

I N S I D E T H I S I S S U E



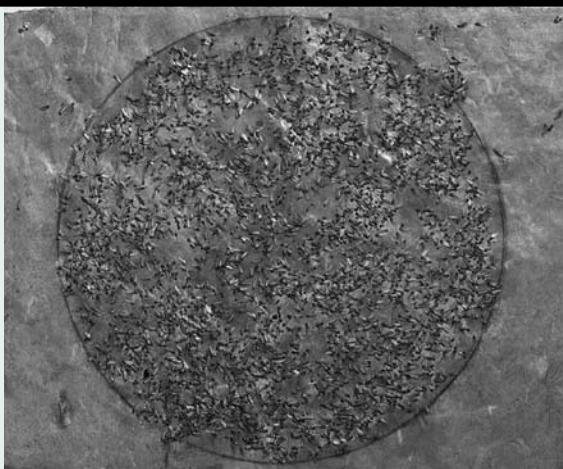
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Idaho's seven degrees of latitude suggests range, freedom from narrow restrictions, and a tolerated variety of action and opinion.

MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE IN GARDEN CITY continued



Luminosity, installation, Prichard Gallery, Moscow, 2009.



Top: *Umbra Series #1*, shellac, graphite, maple seeds on banana paper, 28 x 36".

Bottom: *Personal Progress* (detail), shellac, graphite, acrylic, cut paper images on handmade paper, 39 x 25".



Sheltering That Which is Fragile and Precious A to Z, shellac, waxed string, dictionary pages, 44 x 39".

five minutes of downtown. Objection sustained. It took her two years to adjust; now, however, she says she cherishes “the acceptance of individuality that is a part of Idaho and the West.”

All the while, Mitchell’s art had remained as necessary to her as oxygen to fire. But by 1989, somewhat insecure about being regarded as an artist without a degree, she once again returned to school (Boise State University this time), challenged her lower division requirements and in two years graduated with the BFA her intelligence deserved. She promptly rented a shared studio downtown. She had the first one-woman show at a local gallery. Possessed of a resonant sense of her own artistic identity, she has marched to her own bass drum ever since.

When her daughter Becky graduated from college in 1998, the two of them travelled to Italy. Of the journey Sarel says, “I never had a recognized goal in my life until I went to Italy, and then my goal became getting back.”

Great work can come at any stage of your life.

Mitchell, who has battled repeated health problems and repeatedly accommodated or surmounted them, admits to occasional glooms of mortality—even titling a painting “Dreaming of the Sea at Twilight Descending,” but she seeks inspiration in older artists. She finds it in New York’s Will Barnet, for example, who has had 80 one-man shows and is still painting at 99, without compromise. She reads a quote from him in a recent newspaper story. “Painting is almost like a

religious experience which should go on and on. Age just gives you the freedom to do something you’ve never done before. Great work can come at any stage of your life.”

After Sarel’s mother died, her father made annual month-long visits to Garden City. One afternoon, looking at her work with his back turned, he said softly, “I wish I could paint like you.”

On the wall beside the Art League card is another, a postcard with a scratchy scrawl: “Hi,” it reads, “Still alive as you can surmise. Still kicking around the old paint brushes. This is one of my latest. I hope to be reaching my 81st birthday. Love, Ulek.” Painting until he was 86, he died at 87. *For age is opportunity no less / Than youth itself, though in another dress, / And as the evening twilight fades away / The sky is filled with stars, invisible by day.* (Longfellow)

Mitchell’s is an unstill life. For ten years, she volunteered as a docent, and for seven years served on the board of directors at Boise Art Museum; she served two terms on the Boise City Arts Commission and currently is on the Garden City Arts Commission. Additionally, she has earned a fair share of recognition: a Governor’s Award in the Arts for excellence in the arts; a prestigious visual arts fellowship from the Idaho Commission on the Arts; acceptance into the 1989 and 1991 Idaho Biennial and 2004 and 2010 Idaho Triennial exhibitions. In 2009, she was selected for a dual exhibition, “Luminosity,” at the Prichard Gallery in Moscow, Idaho. In 2011, she says, “I’ve had an extraordinary year making and selling art, receiving commissions. I had six pieces hanging at once in the Boise Art Museum.” Sarel Tosher Mitchell: Just one more star filling that limitless sky.

– CC



Sarel Mitchel,
Deborah Hardee photo.

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MONEY?

NOT SO MUCH

Levels of service

As the executive director of the Idaho Commission on the Arts, I regularly forward economic forecasts to the members of our governing board, such as the recent data from Idaho's Division of Financial Management and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). The economic forecasts are encouraging—for the long term. State revenues continue to look promising for the current fiscal year; we must remember, however, that the short-term federal assistance will be expended by fiscal year-end. And even with increased revenues, state government will be challenged to maintain levels of service that Idahoans have come to expect. According to NCSL, Idaho will return to peak revenues in Fiscal Year 2014 (July 1, 2013-June 30, 2014). So it may take three more years to return to so-called economic “normality.”

Art, music, and books

In this connection, I can't help thinking of how the Great Depression formed my parents' attitudes about money and financial security. I didn't grow up in austerity, nor did I grow up in a house burdened with crushing debt. My folks were frugal, saving and paying for the things they decided were important for them and for their two children. Their debts were usually backed up with assets, and such debt was *always* rare.

Still, we had art, music, and books, just as we had a car in the driveway, food in the 'fridge, and savings in the bank. Frugality needn't be a synonym for austerity. We simply didn't live in the *biggest* house or have the *most expensive* possessions. Yet we still had the things that make life beautiful. My sister and I took piano lessons. My sister had her sports gear. I had my oil paints and alto saxophone. My folks' frugality did, however, shape my own attitudes: I do recycle paper bags, boxes, rubber bands. And my perception of our lingering recession is also affected by this attitude—reinforcing principles of frugality and savings—but not through an austere asceticism.

Prudence and restraint

So as Idaho moves halfway through a predicted five-year recession, state government, which avoided irresponsible spending during more prosperous times, will doubtless act with similar prudence and restraint during the next period of economic expansion. Our own agency has demonstrated such frugality without jeopardizing core services. Our staff has performed

steadfast service, being at the same time attentive to administrative and program conservations. Through the downs and ups, these habits will continue to serve us well. The prudence learned and implemented from our zero-based budgeting ensures that the Commission will meet its statutory duties while directing its resources to constituent-service priorities. As one of our staff put it during zero-based-budget planning: “We will extract burrs now and keep them from reattaching themselves later.”

We build...assist...teach... collaborate...link

This isn't about retraction, however—it's about being focused on the higher-impact activities that best advance our mission, providing arts access for all Idahoans. Much of what we're doing to accomplish that has never been stretched so far. We advance our way into this new territory—fraught with complexity in planning, implementation, and administration—and we build service innovations in support of nonprofit arts organizations and businesses. We assist, for example, Idaho's professional arts organizations with cash-flow management services, employing cash-flow forecasting to arrest fiscal crises before they occur. Furthermore, we teach arts organization leaders how to establish fully-secured lines of credit with credit-holders, providing access to local capital and increasing their control over their own financial futures. We have streamlined grant-making to reduce the time and cost associated with applying for those grants. We work with our partners at the Idaho Department of Education to bring teachers, principals, and teaching artists together at the annual ArtsPowered Schools Summer Institute, strengthening arts learning in our schools. We collaborate, moreover, with local arts councils to offer workshops for professional artists in the business of the arts. We send Idaho writers to rural communities and schools to give readings and workshops. And we link masters of our traditional arts and crafts with apprentices who will practice and perpetuate them.

So although an old cowboy once told me “worry is like a rocking chair—it will give you something to do, but it won't get you anywhere,” I still worry late at night, yet take some comfort and shelter in the belief that the service-advances we are accomplishing are worth every new furrow in my brow.

—Michael Faison, Executive Director

the GREENHOUSE

The Sorenson Magnet School team brainstorm ideas for an "essential understanding" as a way for students to better understand their world while engaging in the process of self-expression.



E F F E C T :

Discovering Intentions for Teaching and Learning

The Idaho Commission on the Arts, in partnership with the State Department of Education, put the annual, jointly planned, ArtsPowered Schools Institute on hold for summer 2010. In its place the partners worked with a group of multi-year ArtsPowered Schools participants to refine an aspect of Institute work. The idea was to engage five small teams (one principal, one classroom teacher from the school, and one Commission teaching artist) in a facilitated protocol to refine the process of developing artist in residence projects that would include: in-depth integration of the arts and the schools' literacy goals; a focus on engaging students in work that "matters" to them; and a commitment to noticing and documenting the *impact* of the residency work on student learning.

The starting point for our "Greenhouse" year was a two-day meeting in Boise, where the five schools each worked with a Commission teaching artist to co-create outstanding artist-in-residence projects. The Greenhouse teams included Troy Elementary, Valley Elementary, Idaho Arts Charter, Sorenson Magnet School, and Christine Donnell School of the Arts and their respective Commission teaching artists Lizette Fife, Norma Pintar, Sue Rooke, Ben Love, and LiAnne Hunt. These artists participated in a facilitated planning

process (led by nationally recognized arts education consultant Deb Brzoska) designed to yield the most effective discussion possible.

All participants were encouraged to approach the planning process as creative brainstorming, guiding cooperative interaction toward maximizing arts teaching and learning during artist-in-residence projects. In preparation, teachers were asked to share the most important literacy challenges they and their students faced in the coming school year. The teacher and principal opened the conversation with "let me tell you about our school" followed by "let me tell you about my work as an artist." The discussions proceeded to classroom context and learning challenges and identifying the power of the art form to meet these challenges.

Greenhouse residency plans, submitted last October, reflect the kinds of experiences we want for Idaho students. The collaboration between practicing artists and passionate educators resulted in a personalization of the residencies around work that "matters" to students and that increased the value of the experience for students, teachers, and artists, exponentially. Greenhouse Residency plans are currently being carried out in Troy, Hazelton, Nampa, Coeur d'Alene, and Meridian.

As a community of learners at ArtsPowered Schools and the Greenhouse, dedicated participants

have worked together to better understand the qualities and characteristics needed to create outstanding arts teaching and learning experiences for Idaho students.

All Greenhouse residency teams are currently documenting student learning, collecting examples of student work, and are participating in a reflection upon their cooperative work in order to tell the story of the student learning.

Each Greenhouse residency team will present shared observations and documentation of the residency student learning as a part of ArtsPowered Schools – Summer 2011.

– Ruth Piispanen, Program Director, Arts Education

Save The Date

ArtsPowered Schools Institute

Integrating Word and Image

June 26 - July 1, 2011 Caldwell, Idaho

For more information on how you can participate visit the ArtsPowered Schools Web site at www.artspowerschools.idaho.gov



Education consultant Deb Brzoska, asks the planning teams to consider, "What kinds of arts activities might best tap into a range of thinking skills?"



The Valley Elementary team discuss dance learning targets for student learners with traditional Mexican dancer Norma Pintar.

...ONE SKEIN

Ka-ron! Institute participants Paul Zmoleck, Kim Queen, and Robin Baumgartner imprinting on *Branta canadensis*.



OF GEESE,

*cleaving the murk of
the March thaw, is
the Spring.*

Change Leader Institute: Lessons from Geese

The first day I began working at the Idaho Commission on the Arts, I had a surprising and somewhat alarming visit from a goose that smashed into my office window. The sound of the bird against my aged glass pane was so loud that it brought my colleagues out of their offices to see what, in fact, the new gal was doing. I sat stunned as the goose and I, nose and bill separated by a fragile pane, attempted to assess possible damages. The geese that had accompanied the confused bird roosted on the ridgeline of the house next door, clearly visible from my desk, apparently waiting for us to collect our wits. Little did I know at the time that the metaphor of that moment would eventually serve as a significant theme in my community development work with the Idaho Commission on the Arts.

Last spring I attended a workshop, presented by the Utah Division of Arts and Museums, called the Change Leader Institute. This program, developed by Utah's community development director Anna Boulton and business executive Don Wilhem, consists of three days designed to bring artists and arts administrators together for a unique, intensive, professional-development session. Last fall, along with my fellow Change Leaders, I was certified in the Change Leader Program and witnessed the culminating community art projects developed as a result of this program.

The Change Leader Institute is based on the premise that geese—yes, the same species abundant around the Commission's building, have an inherent sense of leadership and teamwork worthy of our admiration. The first lesson in the Change Leader Program uses geese as an example: that as each bird flaps its wings flying in the familiar chevron, it creates "uplift" for the following goose. By flying in a V-formation, "the flock increases its range by 71 percent compared to each of them flying solo." When it comes to teamwork, geese excel—and thus geese serve as an apt analogy throughout the Change Leader Program.

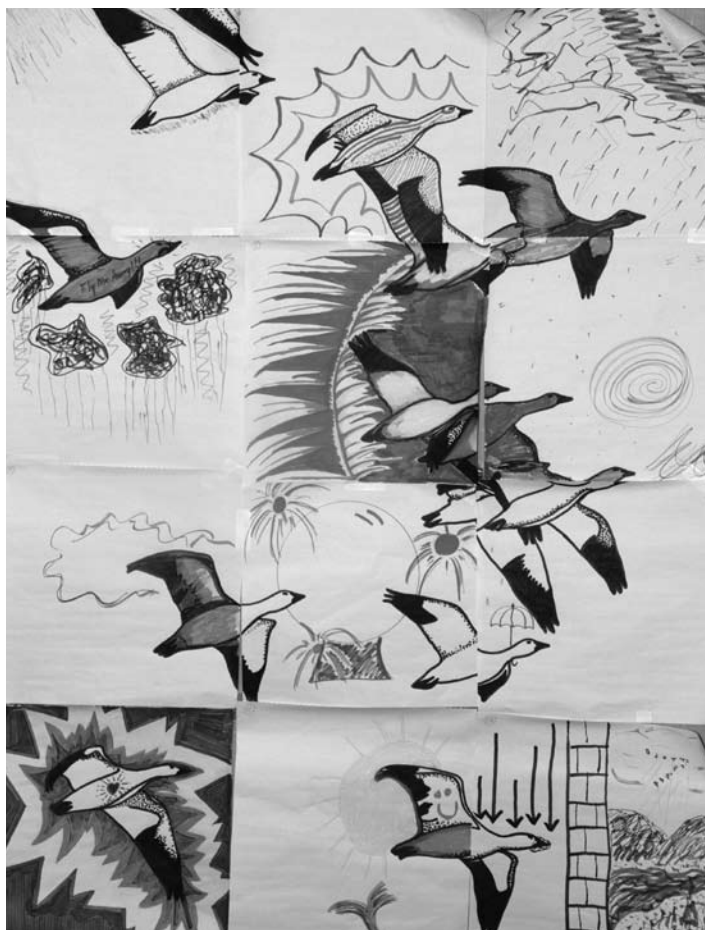
Those who attend the three-day Change Leader Institute become certified in the program by conducting an arts project within their own community. The follow-up components for the Program include: Leadership Circles, Change Leader conferences, participation in a social networking site, and further

professional development. The goal of the program is to better equip arts and cultural leaders to deal with environmental and organizational change, as well as to create a statewide mentoring network in the arts and cultural communities.

In March 2011, the Commission selected representatives from all regions of the state to participate in the first Change Leader Institute in Idaho. The Institute was hosted by the Commission in partnership with the Utah Division of Arts and Museums, led by Anna Boulton and consultant Don Wilhelm, who have been presenting the workshops in Utah for the past several years.

In the months ahead, there will be another Institute scheduled in Idaho to "train the trainers." Arts administrators from Idaho will be taught by Commission staff and Boulton and Wilhelm in order to host a future Change Leader Institute in their own regions

—Michelle Coleman, Community Development Director



Collaborative art piece by the "Grey Geese Gang," ink markers, 5 x 3'.



WITHOUT

THE AESTHETIC,

the computer is but a mindless speed machine, producing effects without substance.

– Paul Rand, designer

Design Tips for Artist Web Sites (Part 1)

The way your site looks makes a huge difference in how effective it is. It's important to remember, however, that the site is meant to enhance the art, not overwhelm it. "Although artists are by definition visually creative, it's important that the Web site not become an art form in itself," cautions Santa Fe web developer Wil Cone. "The purpose of the site is to showcase you and your work and to that end, the design you choose must set off your work to its best advantage. It should be understated and should not distract from the artwork." Accordingly, here are some fundamentals to keep in mind as you and your designer are putting your site together.

Basics

Above all, an artist's Web site should function as an online portfolio, showcasing the artist's best work and his or her professional credentials. As such, it must be informative, engaging and professional.

Essential components include a biography, professional photographs of your artwork, lists of exhibitions and galleries where you have shown your work, articles written by or about you. In short, as artist and Web designer Cathy Carey puts it, "Anything to toot your own horn and set yourself apart."

Site Organization

"Studies show that sites lose users in proportion to the number of pages they have to click through, so starting with a strong home page, featuring the best or most recent examples of your work, is always a good idea," Cone suggests.

Carey says the overall organization should be thoughtful and logical. "It is almost like you are making a book," she says. "And the visitor is turning the pages of your book. Or they are coming into your physical gallery. What do you want in the front room? What do you want in the next room? What are they seeing, and what is the order in which they are seeing it?"

Different artists display online galleries of work in various ways, but there are some general guidelines that can make it easier for a viewer to navigate the site.

"There are a couple of ways to divide your gallery," Carey indicates. "If you are known for painting exclusively in oil, you don't have to divide it by medium. But some people paint in multiple media, so you might want to split it up into oil, acrylic, watercolor, and so on. Or maybe you are known for painting specific locations such as Tuscany or Maui, so you would want to have a gallery for each, and each would be a page—a menu page that would lead you to a series of pages."

Other popular ways of organizing include grouping work by year, or by specific bodies of work. Since you know your audience better than your designer does, make sure you let the designer know what you think would work best. Regardless of which method you employ, enabling a visitor to move through the site quickly is vital.

"You want them to be able to get to where they want to go quickly," explains Carey. "So if somebody is only interested in oils, you want them to be able to get there right away. Otherwise, they will get frustrated. You don't want visitors to have to wade through hundreds of randomly placed photos."

Layout Compatibility

To avoid being cropped off of different monitors, the tool bar should be placed on the left or at the top. "Since most viewers will have mid-size monitors (1024 x 768 pixels), it's safe to design the site to function best at that size," Cone says. He and other designers also advise using what's known as a liquid layout. This is a common feature that allows the site to reformat to correctly fill the space when viewed on various size monitors.

"This won't necessarily allow the site to look perfect on everything from mobile phone screens to 30-inch monitors, but it can make it look its best within a normal range of monitor sizes," Cone explains. "It's preferable to creating the site frozen or static for only the smallest monitor."

– Gay Jervy

(A Baltimore-based freelance writer, Jervy has written for *The New York Times*, *Money Magazine* and *Inc.* magazine, and served on the staffs of the *American Lawyer* and *Advertising Age* magazines. She can be reached at Gjervy@rcn.com.)

To be continued in July issue of *Latitudes*. Reprinted with permission from *Art Calendar Magazine*.

– Barbara Robinson, Artist Services Director

and ALTHOUGH

I LOVE HAVING SEEN HOW

the other half lives, I will always call Idaho my home.

– Mary Ann Newcomer



Guild weavers and spinners at work in Idaho Falls. Guild photo.



Tack braided by Charly Liesen, Hazelton. MCG photo.



Rawhide braiding workshop. Steve Derricott observes Pablo Lozano and Bret Haskett. MCG photo.

The Year of Making a Home in Idaho: Fieldnotes 2010

Newcomers and Old Traditions

Since Boise is the preferred site for refugee resettlement, it has the largest refugee population within the state. From March to April, the Idaho State Historical Museum hosted “The Comforts of Home: Crafting a New Life in the Treasure Valley,” an exhibition featuring handcrafts by twenty-some refugees. Introducing the exhibition, folklorist and curator Laura Marcus said, “These new settlers bring their own stories of separation and loss, tales of survival and resilience, and memories of home.” The artists, whose work was on display, participated in craft demonstrations. As well, the museum featured Bhutanese music, poetry recitations, and writing with Fidel Nshombo, a poet from Rwanda. The exhibition closed with an afternoon of food-sampling, along with stories from *Making West Home in Idaho: Stories and Recipes from Boise’s Refugee Community*, a publication of the Western Folklife Center of Elko, Nevada, in collaboration with Idaho’s Folk & Traditional Arts Program (FTAP).

Arrival Stories

Lacking the customary language, family, food, and living spaces makes it hard for refugees to express their aspirations and needs, or to share their artistic traditions. Connecting histories and present experience encouraged the FTAP and the English Learning Center (ELC) to offer a pilot program to refugees in writing about their personal experiences. Working with writer Malia Collins from Boise, the students shared their “arrival stories” on paper. The project was so successful that it will continue with

ELC students, along with artists in craft groups hosted by Artisans4Hope, a Boise nonprofit organization that builds on existing refugee handcraft skills and talents, providing training and supplies that may lead to marketing such items through employment or entrepreneurship.

Building Skills and Community

In Idaho, learning how to make or repair cowboy and horse gear, or working with wool, are part of daily life on cattle and sheep ranches. This year, the FTAP began a series of workshops to further the creative and professional development of master practitioners of different occupational arts. The first two workshops were for wool workers and rawhide braiders.

From last September through December, the Weaving, Spinning, and Fiber Arts Guild of Idaho Falls (33 years old with 55 members) hosted regional masters in a series of thirteen workshops for members. Their training ranged from fiber preparation tools and dyeing, to diverse applications of spinning, to knitting techniques with handspun yarn. Weavers worked on rigid heddle looms and on warping multi-harness looms.

From September 28 to October 1 at the Idaho State Department of Agriculture, Argentinean masters Armando Deferrari and Pablo Lozano conducted workshops at for Idaho master rawhide braiders Bret Hasket, Charly Liesen, Deana Attebery, Jeff Minor, Kirby Orme, and Steve Derricott, who were joined by Ron Titus, California; Donnie Chulufas, Missouri; and Timothy George, Oregon. Domingo Hernandez from Florida translated.

– Maria Carmen Gambliel, Director, Folk Arts



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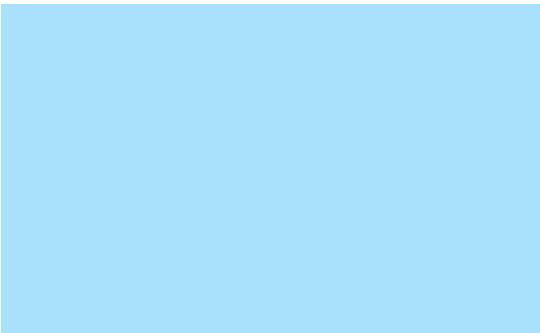
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*It is a shame to see in the work of an artist
the limitations of his or her critic.*

– Robert Brault

DEADLINES

*Through distant streets wandered a timekeeper,
beating on a gong the hours as they fled.*

–John Hersey



QuickFunds

June 13, 2011

September 12, 2011

ArtsPowered Schools 2011*

Registration open for June 26-July 1 Session

**Each summer the ArtsPowered Schools Summer Institute offers a residential professional opportunity designed to immerse educators in strategies for teaching in and through the arts.*

The 2011 ArtsPowered Schools Institute will focus on the arts and literacy. Sessions will explore reading and writing through multiple art forms, model how the arts can be integrated into any classroom environment, demonstrate how an essential understanding can be examined through multiple layers of experience, and engage participants in documenting the achievement of learning targets.

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